

The Kandyan Flintlock: A Historical Investigation of King Rajasinghe II's Flintlock Guns

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Sri Lanka is renowned for its technology, art and crafts throughout the ancient history. It has shown its expertise in these fields through technical inventions and artistic traditions whose examples are ample and ubiquitous. Such an example is the Flintlock Gun of King Rajasinghe II who ruled Kandy from 1630 to 1680 A.D. He waged war against Portuguese and Dutch and is considered as the most powerful of the Kandyan kings. It is natural that he had the technical and economic strength and stability in warfare. According to Robert Knox, King Rajasinghe II owned artillery and yards of guns at his disposal. This research investigates the historical significance of the Flintlock Gun which is believed to be one of the guns thus owned by King Rajasinghe II. The Flintlock Gun is currently housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in USA. Three such guns have been reported so far bearing resemblance to Kandyan art and technology (USA, Russia and Sri Lanka). This research is focused on studying the history of the afore mentioned gun which answered many questions arose from its appearance at the Metropolitan Museum of Art remote from Sri Lanka. A study of literary sources has been undertaken in this investigation and it is concluded that the constant warfare that the King had to undergo may have necessitated the need for arms and armor such as the Flintlock gun.

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